

Placer County Tahoe Basin Community Plan Update

Policy Framework

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Tahoe Basin Community Plan Policy Framework

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Placer County Tahoe Basin encompasses approximately 80 square miles along the northwest shore of Lake Tahoe and consists of a series of beachside communities near the lakeshore and vast areas of open space, recreational, and backcountry lands. Lake Tahoe and the surrounding natural landscape provide for extraordinary recreation and scenic experiences. The Lake is the dominant feature of the Region—one of the largest and deepest lakes in the world.

This Policy Framework is designed to provide overarching goals and guiding policies to guide growth and development of communities located in the Placer County Tahoe Basin, provide for the protection and enhancement of natural resources, and further attainment of environmental thresholds. These Guiding Policies provide the platform for individual policies and actions that will be included in Community Plan Policy Document. They have been crafted with input from the community and respond to specific opportunities and challenges.

COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

There are currently nine community/general plans within the Placer County Tahoe Basin. These plans are dated, reflecting conditions and trends from nearly 20 years ago. The Community Plan Update consists of two main parts: (1) a policy document which will consolidate those plans into one, single, over-arching policy document that addresses land use and natural resource policy for the entire portion of Placer County within the Tahoe Basin, and (2) separate zoning/development standards and design guidelines for four sub-areas within the Community Plan Area boundary that reflect the unique characteristics of those communities.

AREA PLANS

The 2012 TRPA Regional Plan Update initiated a Region-wide transition to a planning and permitting system where all requirements—TRPA, local, state, and federal—are addressed in coordinated area plans. Area plans replace plan area statements and TRPA community plans as the primary land use and planning tools for communities located in the Tahoe Basin. Prior to becoming effective, area plans must be reviewed and approved by TRPA and found to be in conformance with the Regional Plan. Approved area plans provide various benefits including more autonomy at the local level by removing the need in most cases for two layers of permit requirements and approvals (Placer County and TRPA) and allow for local communities to implement Regional Plan policies at a local scale with greater flexibility. Model area plans contain the following common elements: current conditions, conservation, land use, transportation, recreation, public services and facilities, and implementation. For TRPA's purposes, the overarching Tahoe Basin Community Plan Policy Document, combined with the separate zoning/development standards and design guidelines for individual sub-areas, will serve as four separate area plans for the Placer County portion of the Tahoe Basin.

Conservation

VEGETATION

Since 1900, about 75 percent of the marshlands and 50 percent of the meadows in the Tahoe Basin have been disturbed or lost to urban development. Consequently, conservation of the remaining wetland and riparian vegetation types is critical for the short- and long-term health of the Lake Tahoe Basin and its flora and fauna. Vegetation policies seek to guide the protection and management of the Plan Area's vegetation resources.

- Provide for a wide mix and increased diversity of native plant communities, free of invasive plant species
- Provide for the protection, maintenance and restoration of such unique eco-systems as wetlands, meadows, and riparian and other native vegetation
- Conserve threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant species and uncommon plant communities
- Provide for and increase the amount of late seral/old growth forest stands
- Retain the appropriate stocking level and distribution of snags and coarse woody debris to provide habitat for organisms that depend on such features and to perpetuate natural ecological processes

WILDLIFE

At least 289 terrestrial and semi-terrestrial vertebrates occur in the Lake Tahoe Basin, including 217 birds, 59 mammals, five amphibians, and eight reptiles. Of these, approximately 40 are special-status wildlife species. Wildlife policies focus on maintaining suitable habitats and habitat diversity for wildlife.

- Maintain suitable habitats for all indigenous species of wildlife without preference to game or non-game species through maintenance and improvement of habitat diversity
- Preserve, enhance, and where feasible, expand habitats essential for threatened, endangered, rare, or sensitive species

FISHERIES

Lakes and streams play a key role in sustaining fish populations as some fish species use both lake and stream environments to fulfill their lifecycles. Similar to wildlife, fishery policies focus on the maintenance of prime fish habitats.

- Improve aquatic habitat essential for the growth, reproduction, and perpetuation of existing and threatened native fish resources

SOILS

Human activity increases erosion potential, primarily through the development of structures and impervious surfaces, and the removal of vegetative cover. Soil policies seek to maintain soil productivity and vegetative cover, and prevent excessive sediment and nutrient runoff into streams and Lake Tahoe.

- Minimize soil erosion and the loss of soil productivity in order to sustain forest vegetation, water filtration and storage, and wildlife habitats within the Plan Area
- Encourage restoration of native wetland habitat to provide natural filtration of stormwater/developed area runoff
- Encourage appropriate landscaping in developed areas that will minimize negative impacts to natural runoff and filtration processes

SHOREZONE

The scenic quality of the Lake Tahoe shoreline is enhanced by views that range from sandy beaches to isolated coves, rocky shorelines, and steep cliffs. The competing demands for development of the shorezone need to be reconciled in light of the unique qualities that stand to be lost.

- Provide for the appropriate shorezone uses of Lake Tahoe, while preserving the shorezone's natural and aesthetic qualities

SCENIC RESOURCES

The scenic quality of the Tahoe Basin is appreciated by visitors and residents alike and is viewed from roads, trails, scenic resources such as parks and public beaches, and the surface of Lake Tahoe. Scenic policies are intended to preserve views of natural landscapes and features offered from the Plan Area's scenic corridors, recreation areas, and bike and pedestrian trails.

- Maintain and restore the scenic qualities of the Plan Area with natural landscape
- Improve the accessibility of Lake Tahoe for public viewing
- Encourage redevelopment of man-made features along the roadway and shoreline within scenic corridors that are in non-attainment

STREAM ENVIRONMENT ZONE

While SEZs only make up 5 percent of the land area in the Tahoe Region, they provide key habitat for 84 percent of the 250 wildlife species in the Region and can help to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff concentrations by 70 to 90 percent. SEZ policies seek to promote maintenance, protection and restoration of SEZ land in the Plan Area.

- Provide for the long-term preservation and restoration of stream environment zones by encouraging and supporting public acquisition of SEZ land by land banks and public entities
- Encourage restoration of SEZ lands that have been disturbed, developed or subdivided
- Manage areas of open space to promote conservation of vegetation and protection of watersheds
- Incentivize the restoration of previously altered vegetative communities or low capability lands to their natural appropriate ecological state

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources include sites, buildings, structures, or objects that may have archaeological, historical, cultural, or scientific significance. Cultural resource policies prioritize the preservation and protection of historic resources in the Plan Area.

- Identify, preserve, and encourage interpretation of sites of historical, cultural and architectural significance

ENERGY

Energy policies seek to promote energy conservation and reduce impacts to natural resources and the environment.

- Promote energy conservation programs and development of alternative energy sources to lessen dependence on scarce and high-cost energy sources

WATER QUALITY

Several external and internal factors are known to affect water quality of the Basin's aquatic system including: precipitation, air quality, atmospheric deposition, land use intensity, impervious cover, urban stormwater runoff, and soil disturbance. Water quality policies seek to reduce or eliminate point and non-point sources of pollutants in a manner consistent with the County of Placer Lake Tahoe Pollutant Reduction Plan.

- Coordinate with federal, state, regional, and private stakeholders when implementing local water quality management program projects to aid in the effort to restore and maintain Lake Tahoe's unique transparency, color and clarity
- Reduce or eliminate point and non-point sources of pollutants that affect, or potentially affect, water quality

AIR QUALITY

Cars and trucks are responsible for most of the smog-producing pollutants (nitrogen oxides and reactive organic gases) in the Tahoe Basin and two-thirds of the carbon monoxide. Air quality policies seek to maintain TRPA's air quality thresholds and all applicable federal, state and local standards for air quality.

- Attain and maintain local ambient air quality levels that help meet regional attainment status and contain low levels of air pollutants

NOISE

Transportation corridors are the main source of noise in the Plan Area. Other noise sources include motorized watercraft, construction vehicles and equipment, machinery associated with refuse collection and snow removal, and off-road vehicles. Noise goals seek to achieve and maintain Placer County and TRPA noise thresholds in the Plan Area.

- Work with TRPA, Caltrans, TART and the Placer County Public Works Roads Division to mitigate transportation-related noise impacts on residential and sensitive uses. Additionally, continue to limit hours for construction and demolition work to reduce construction-related noises.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Natural hazards in the Lake Tahoe Region are most frequently related to dangers of avalanches, wildfires, flooding, earthquakes and seiches. Natural hazards policies focus on identifying and taking precautionary measures to minimize risks to natural hazards.

- Minimize risks from natural hazards such as flooding and wildfire hazards

Land Use

Land use policies seek to ensure equilibrium between the preservation and enhancement of the Plan Area's natural environment and appropriate development/redevelopment of the manmade environment.

- Direct the amount and location of new land uses consistent with the environmental threshold carrying capacities and the other goals of the TRPA Regional Plan and Bi-State Compact
- Provide for a distribution of land use that ensures the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the Plan Area
- In areas designated as Mixed-Use or Tourist in the Regional Plan, provide incentives and remove barriers to redevelopment through use, building, and site design standards consistent with the Regional Plan that reflect the unique character of each area and respond to local design issues and considerations
- Retain, enhance and redevelop existing commercial, industrial and tourist accommodation land uses to strengthen the Plan Area's economic base
- Preserve local-serving industrial areas, which provide locations for industrial and service commercial businesses that support the local economy
- Preserve and protect residential neighborhoods while allowing limited opportunities for small-scale retail and service uses such as small stores selling fresh produce and basic daily goods, cafes, and coffee shops
- Facilitate orderly development of larger plan area sites (e.g., Tahoe City Golf Course) by requiring master plans or a similar planning program. Ensure all such plans provide for a mix of uses in a pedestrian- and transit-oriented setting, including recreational amenities, and provide site sensitive planning and environmental design to support and protect sensitive habitat
- Provide for the protection and preservation of open space, as well as conservation, wilderness and backcountry land located within the Plan Area
- Provide areas for passive and active recreation uses and related services to improve public access and enjoyment of Lake Tahoe and the Truckee River. Allow limited supportive retail and service uses when coupled with environmental enhancement improvements
- Require development on properties with lake frontage to be designed and built to maximize visual and public access to and along the shore as well as require public amenities on site
- Develop zoning districts consistent with Regional Plan that reflect the unique community characteristics of the plan areas

MIXED USE

Mixed use policies focus on supporting complimentary uses, mitigating potential conflict, and promoting pedestrian-oriented amenities.

- Recognize the importance of mixed-use areas to the vitality and quality of life in the Plan Area
- Promote site sensitive design and pedestrian-oriented activities in mixed-use developments
- Foster high quality design, diversity, and a mix of amenities in new residential, commercial and tourist accommodation
- Establish building form standards for mixed-use tourist districts that build on the existing tourist recreation theme with high-quality storefronts designed to attract tourists and meet the needs of local residents

TOWN CENTERS

Town Center policies promote redevelopment and mixed-use development in a pedestrian- and transit-oriented setting.

- Encourage redevelopment and revitalization of Town Centers (Kings Beach and Tahoe City) in a manner that improves environmental and economic conditions and creates a more sustainable and less auto-dependent development pattern
- Encourage the transfer of development rights from environmentally-sensitive lots and outlying residential areas to Town Centers
- Encourage development of “complete” Town Centers that provide a mix of residential, commercial, service, and tourist accommodations in a pedestrian- and transit-oriented setting with connections to residential neighborhoods and recreational areas

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community design policies seek to create more walkable, livable neighborhoods through improved connections and mixed-use centers, while ensuring that design elements of new, remodeled and redeveloped buildings are compatible with the natural, scenic and recreational values of the Plan Area.

- Encourage preservation and enhancement of the natural features and qualities of the Region, provide public access to scenic views and enhance the quality of the built environment
- Establish community design criteria to ensure the height, build, texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signage, landscaping, and other design elements of new, remodeled and redeveloped buildings are compatible with the natural, scenic and recreational values of the Plan Area
- Establish building height standards that support a high-quality, pedestrian-scaled environment, in neighborhood centers and town areas compatible with scenic values of the Plan Area
- Limit length of buildings and articulate building entrances with recesses, projections, overhangs, and architectural details in order to create a pleasant and engaging experience for pedestrians

- Preserve and strengthen each Plan Area's overall image and create a safe, walkable and attractive environment
- Emphasize compact form and pedestrian orientation in Town Centers, in locations that many residents reach on foot, by bicycle, on transit, or by short drives

DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Development policies seek to link the timing and phasing of new development, redevelopment and environmental improvement projects with progress toward meeting environmental thresholds.

- Direct residential development first to those areas most suitable for development in accordance with environmental threshold carrying capacities and other considerations, such as flood hazard risk, infrastructure capacity, and progress toward accomplishing water quality improvement
- Encourage the development and redevelopment of tourist accommodations in the Plan Area by removing barriers to hotel development (or redevelopment) and promoting opportunities for public-private partnerships
- Manage development and redevelopment consistent with progress toward meeting environmental thresholds
- Encourage consolidation of development and restoration of sensitive lands through transfer of development rights and transfer of land coverage programs. Consider a revised allocation program which allows for inter-jurisdictional transfers and conversion of tourist accommodation units to commercial floor area

HOUSING

Housing policies seek to ensure an adequate supply of housing for all income groups and achieve state, local and regional housing goals.

- Protect and enhance the quality of life in the Plan Area's residential neighborhoods
- Promote housing opportunities for full-time and seasonal residents as well as workers employed within the Region
- Encourage development of very low-, low-, and moderate-income housing throughout the entire Plan Area consistent with Placer County Tahoe Basin's Regional Housing Needs Allocation
- Regularly evaluate housing needs in the Plan Area and update policies and ordinances if necessary to achieve State, Local and Regional housing goals

Recreation and Public Services & Facilities

RECREATION

The Plan Area offers an abundance of recreational opportunities highly valued by visitors and residents. These recreational resources are one of the major drivers of the regional economy and contribute to the quality of life in the Plan Area.

- Encourage opportunities for dispersed recreation (e.g. hiking, riding, cross country skiing, and back country camping) when consistent with environmental values and protection of natural resources
- Provide high-quality recreational opportunities and work with local districts, agencies, schools and sports leagues to provide recreational programming
- Provide a fair share of the total basin capacity for outdoor recreation
- Provide for the appropriate type, location, and rate of development of outdoor recreational uses
- Expand bikeways and multi-purpose trails to provide continuous, safe alternatives for travel in conjunction with transportation systems
- Use open space to meet multiple needs including bike and pedestrian linkages, stormwater drainage, wildlife habitat, and active and passive recreation opportunities
- Protect natural resources from overuse and rectify incompatibility among uses
- Provide for the efficient use of outdoor recreation resources
- Provide sufficient capacity for local-oriented forms of outdoor and indoor recreation in urban areas
- Parks and recreational facilities should be upgraded and expanded to support existing and new development consistent with the Regional Plan and service level standards
- Protect and support existing public beach access as well as secure additional public access rights as opportunities arise

PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES

The Plan Area is served by a comprehensive network of infrastructure and utilities that support its economic function and growth. Public services and facilities policies focus on ensuring an adequate level of public services and facilities in the Plan Area.

- Public services and facilities should be upgraded and expanded to support existing and new development consistent with the Regional Plan
- Consider the existence of adequate and reliable public services and facilities in approving new development
- Prevent liquid and solid wastes from degrading Lake Tahoe and the surface and groundwaters of the Region

- To ensure protection of the public health, safety and general welfare of the Plan Area, educational and public safety services should be sized to be consistent with projected growth levels
- Promote equitable distribution of and access to community-serving facilities throughout the Plan Area
- Protect water supply and quality through conservation and good stormwater management practices
- Encourage the development of joint use facilities (e.g. use of fire stations as trailheads and public restroom facilities) on public land as well as the joint use of recreational facilities at schools
- Encourage efficient use of water resources and investment by promoting consolidations, joint use facilities, and regional water resource planning
- Encourage all water systems address fire suppression water needs

Transportation

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The Plan Area's transportation system is made up of regional roadways and local streets, sidewalks and bike paths, bus systems, and water transit. Transportation policies seek to establish a safe, efficient, and integrated transportation system while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to water quality.

- Strengthen transportation options into and out of the Plan Area
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation network and promote usage of alternative transportation modes
- Promote walkable mixed-use centers, transportation enhancements and environmental improvements that increase the viability of transit systems
- Engage in collaborative and cooperative planning efforts, leveraging resources to implement transportation improvements in an efficient and timely manner
- Develop effective intermodal transportation facilities where multiple transportation modes intersect and/or terminate (e.g., intersection of auto, bicycle/pedestrian trails, transit, and/or waterborne modes)
- Implement transportation demand management (TDM) measures to reduce the number of vehicle trips on the Plan Area's highways
- Upgrade Regional roadways as necessary to improve safety and provide for a more efficient, integrated transportation system
- Encourage development of parking management strategies for the Plan Area

TRANSIT, PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE

As a recreational/resort area with a limited roadway network, public transit services, sidewalks and bike paths are important in expanding mobility capacity and improving environmental conditions.

- Encourage efficient and effective expansion of public transit service and use for both residents and visitors
- Encourage coordination and joint marketing of transit services to create a fully functional regional transit network for visitors and residents
- Implement improvements to complete and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle network taking into consideration year-round weather conditions
- Provide for the maintenance of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in order to minimize erosion into streams and Lake Tahoe
- Encourage bicycle and pedestrian usage as viable and significant modes of transportation at Lake Tahoe

- Develop ongoing sources of regional revenue to fund transit, bicycle, pedestrian and other non-auto-transportation improvements, operations and maintenance
- Work to reduce conflicts between non-motorized and motorized travel, to improve the safety and convenience of non-motorized modes and to smooth traffic flow

Planning Process / How to Submit Comments

Because the Policy Document is meant to implement the community's vision for its future, public participation is an essential part of the planning process. The County, TRPA, and other parties have undertaken extensive outreach and engagement over the past decade, beginning with Pathway 2007 and the Regional Plan Update. Community involvement has been, and continues to be integral to shaping the Policy Document; it is the local residents and workers who can best determine how to create a balanced and livable environment. Therefore, the process has involved plan area team meetings/workshops, town hall meetings, community workshops and visioning charrettes, and a project website – providing for opportunities for input throughout the entire Community Plan Update process.

At this time, the County is soliciting feedback on the Guiding Policies contained in this Policy Framework and the policies that will be incorporated into the Public Review Draft Policy Document. Comments received before February 1, 2014 will be considered in preparation of the Public Review Draft of the Policy Document. There will be additional opportunity to comment on policies after the publication of the Public Review Draft of the Policy Document in Spring 2014.

Community Plan Update Website

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/Home/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/Planning/TahoeBasinCPUpdate.aspx>

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